

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Washington Headquarters Service, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.				
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 23-04-2012		2. REPORT TYPE Master of Military Studies Research Paper		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) September 2011 - April 2012
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Air-Sea Battle Concept: Back to the Future?			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A	
			5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A	
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A	
6. AUTHOR(S) Belt, Russell, A., II			5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A	
			5e. TASK NUMBER N/A	
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) N/A	
			11. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER N/A	
12. DISTRIBUTION AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Unlimited				
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES N/A				
14. ABSTRACT The Air-Sea Battle Concept should expand to include representation from all services in order to ensure a joint solution, because conflicts in the Western Pacific Theater of Operations will be fought across the seams of traditional domains and the interdependence of the domains is an operational imperative in this region. Success in the Western Pacific Theater of Operations depends upon a joint "single battle concept" that embraces the idea that "operations or events in one part of the battlespace often have profound and consequent effects on other areas and events." In order to defeat the Chinese anti-access/area denial strategy, the Department of Defense should implement a joint force approach that leverages existing capabilities and harness the synergy of the entire force rather than seeking first technological solutions within only the Navy and Air Force.				
15. SUBJECT TERMS Air-Sea Battle Concept, Guadalcanal, China, Single Battle Concept				
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 28
a. REPORT Unclass	b. ABSTRACT Unclass	c. THIS PAGE Unclass		
			19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Marine Corps University / Command and Staff College	
			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)	

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## MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Air-Sea Battle Concept: Back to the Future?

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 11-12

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Date: April 6, 2012

Oral Defense Committee Member:

Approved: 

Date: 6 April 12

## Table of Contents

	Page
Disclaimer.....	i
List of Illustrations.....	ii
Executive Summary .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
China: Why the Concern?.....	3
Air-Sea Battle Concept .....	6
Western Pacific in World War II .....	8
Air-Sea: What's Missing? .....	13
Conclusion .....	17
Endnotes .....	19
Bibliography.....	21

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## Illustrations

	Page
Figure 1. China's Annual Real GDP and Military Budget Growth, 2000-2009 .....	5
Figure 2. China's Defensive Strategy: First And Second Island Chains .....	8

## Executive Summary

**Title:** Air-Sea Battle Concept: Back to the Future?

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**Thesis:** The Air-Sea Battle Concept should expand to include representation from all services in order to ensure a joint solution, because conflicts in the Western Pacific Theater of Operations will be fought across the seams of traditional domains and the interdependence of the domains is an operational imperative in this region.

**Discussion:** In what appears to be a “Back to the Future” shift in strategic orientation, the U.S. has focused national power again to the Western Pacific Theater of Operations (WPTO). The reorientation to this region, and specifically the concerns with China’s military modernization, is the driving factor behind the Department of Defense’s new Air-Sea Battle Concept (ASBC). The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) identified China as a risk, and directed the development of a “joint air-sea battle concept” between the Navy and Air Force to address the risk posed by their anti-access/area denial strategy. The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment’s (CSBA) proposed an Air-Sea Battle Concept, but that concept ignores some of the most important lessons learned in the Pacific theater during World War II. The Guadalcanal campaign was the first joint offensive action in the Pacific theater, and the Services would learn invaluable, bloody lessons about operations in this theater. The first lesson was the complete interdependence of the operational domains. Until all the domains were coordinated and synchronized, the Services were incapable of achieving dominance independently. The second lesson centered on the U.S. Navy’s dilemma of aircraft carrier employment in contested waters. These assets were the Navy’s most prized asset and their safety was the highest priority. Land-based aircraft provided more persistent and responsive air coverage in the scouting battle and controlling sea space. Land forces can facilitate the air-sea concept by securing forward bases to augment the Navy and Air Force.

**Conclusion:** Success in the Western Pacific Theater of Operations depends upon a joint “single battle concept” that embraces the idea that “operations or events in one part of the battlespace often have profound and consequent effects on other areas and events.”<sup>1</sup> In order to defeat the Chinese anti-access/area denial strategy, the Department of Defense should implement a joint force approach that leverages existing capabilities and harness the synergy of the entire force rather than seeking first technological solutions within only the Navy and Air Force.

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<sup>1</sup>Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Planning Process. MCWP 5-1*. (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, August 24, 2010), 1-6

*“Strategically, maintaining peace and security across the Asia-Pacific is increasingly crucial to global progress, whether through defending freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, countering the proliferation efforts of North Korea, or ensuring transparency in the military activities of the region's key players.”*

- Mrs. Hillary Clinton, *America's Pacific Century* (2011)

*“With a significant array of available Service capabilities—supplemented as required by specialized joint or other capabilities—joint forces can be designed, organized, equipped, and trained to accomplish a wide variety of military operations.”*

- Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (2011)

The United States of America finds itself in a strategic transition as the wars in Republic of Iraq and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan come to ambiguous conclusions. While these conflicts brought military expansion, technological advancement, and refined tactics on the battlefield, the other elements of national power did not necessarily reap the same benefits. American diplomacy has endured the cost of the perceived “unilateral action” in Iraq, questions arising from the interrogation techniques utilized at the Guantanamo detention facility, and concerns over the continuing policy of preemptive strikes against potential enemies. The U.S. economy suffered significant damage from the near collapse of the financial market stemming from the housing “bubble,” and again from the subsequent recession. This economic downturn reciprocated across Europe, and continues to threaten the stability of American allies. The current situation finds the United States with limited diplomatic and economic capital to invest globally, and, therefore, looking to focus those limited resources where they can achieve the greatest returns.

The Air-Sea Battle Concept is not a new or revolutionary concept. The geography of the Western Pacific Theater of Operations produces unique challenges that have not been at the forefront of modern conflicts, and the potential enemy has the ability to fight beyond the means

possessed by non-state actors and insurgents in recent conflicts. While the Air-Sea Battle Concept is a reasonable approach to reorienting major defense acquisitions to meet the challenges associated with Chinese capabilities, it does not completely capture the challenges associated with operations in this environment. The Air-Sea Battle Concept should expand to include representation from all services in order to ensure a joint solution, because conflicts in the Western Pacific Theater of Operations will be fought across the seams of traditional domains and the interdependence of the domains is an operational imperative in this region.

The Asia-Pacific theater received less attention and resources in recent years while the United States and its European allies focused on meeting the challenges of a global economic crisis and combating international terrorism across the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa. This does not mean, however, that the situation in the Western Pacific Theater of Operations (WPTO) remained stagnant. While the western economies struggled, Asian countries saw significant growth. In 2010, 4 of the 6 top growing economies were in the Asia-Pacific region: Singapore, Taiwan, India, and the China.<sup>1</sup> This economic growth has fueled the modernization of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) and enabled "China's emergence as a regional power."<sup>2</sup>

The rise of the People's Republic of China at such a strenuous time for the United States is potentially unsettling to regional stability. In what appears to be a "Back to the Future" shift in strategic orientation, the United States has focused national power again to the Western Pacific Theater in order to reassert American power and potentially contain any threat to national interest and regional allies. The reorientation to this region, and specifically the concerns with China's military modernization, is the driving factor behind the Department of Defense's new Air-Sea Battle Concept (ASBC).



### China: Why the Concern?

The rise of China is concerning to the United States for a number of reasons, and, until overt steps are taken to mitigate these concerns, it is only prudent for military planners to prepare. The initial documentation for the Air-Sea Battle Concept, *Air-Sea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept*, published by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, paints the picture of another Cold War era arms race. The United States' strategic concerns include, but are not limited to, the modernization of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA).

China has been at the center of recent American strategy. President Barack H. Obama's National Security Strategy recognized China as a "center of influence" that requires both greater integration into global community and monitoring to ensure it does not negatively affect national interests and allies.<sup>3</sup> This integration speaks directly to the economic challenges facing western societies in the face of China's growth, and the impact the Chinese trade imbalance and currency manipulation has upon the global community. Other U.S. leaders have also reinforced this message. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton shifted American diplomacy away from the conflicts in the Middle East and focused efforts in the Asia-Pacific region because, "The Asia-Pacific has become a key driver of global politics. It includes many of the key engines of the global economy, several of our key allies and important emerging powers like China, India, and Indonesia."<sup>4</sup> In a report to the U.S. Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations, Senator Richard G. Lugar, Republican from Indiana, stated, "Greater focus on China is necessary to enhance our national and economic security."<sup>5</sup> In today's complex and interdependent global economy, the

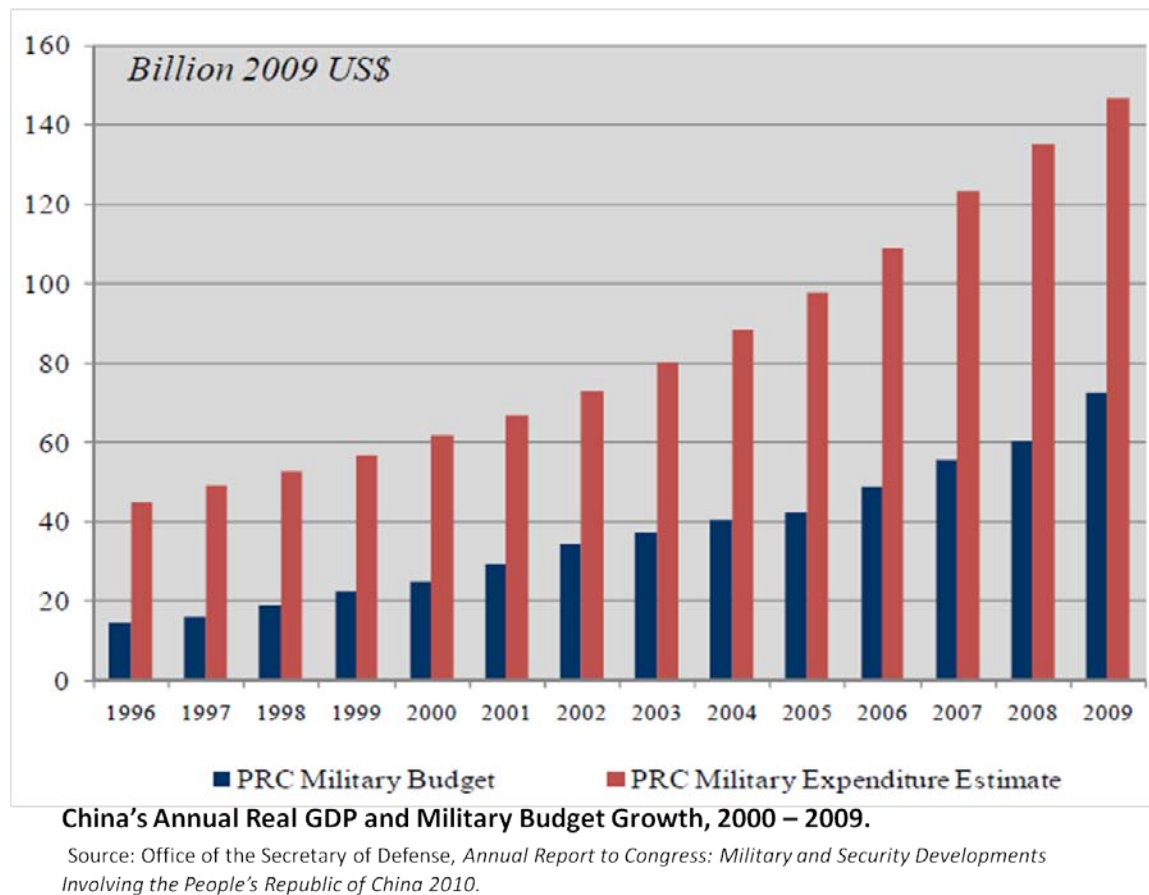
growing economic imbalance between China and the United States is a threat to national interests.

Although China is outpacing much of the world economically, the Chinese government remains an authoritarian regime. This remains fundamentally at odds with the U.S. strategy which continues to espouse, “America’s commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.”<sup>6</sup> These ideological differences exacerbate the diplomatic and economic challenges of integrating China into the global community, but also mark the current Chinese paradox. The government of China wants economic growth, and has instituted incremental reforms in order to integrate into the greater global economy. However, they consider internal control as the highest priority and have resisted any democratic reforms that may threaten the Party’s current level of control and authority. As economic expansion continues and greater wealth is distributed amongst the Chinese populace, the control of the authoritarian regime may become the target of increased internal dissent. The dilemma between continued economic expansion and internal control could result in strategic choices for the government and further destabilize the region.

An authoritarian regime also presents a military challenge in that its intentions can change quickly with minimal warning. Current Chinese intentions remain intentionally ambiguous, but the escalating tension stemming from their claims to natural resources in the South China Sea and increasing polar exploration demonstrate a desire to expand more than just influence. An authoritarian regime growing economically and expanding with veiled intentions presents a risk to the United States that, unless its intentions are professed or determined, requires the United States military to focus on the expanding military capabilities of China.<sup>7</sup>

The modernization of the Chinese military has been systematic and deliberate since the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis saw the United States and China faceoff over Taiwan. While Chinese

expenditures are not public record and, therefore, difficult to ascertain, the information that is available is worthy of study. Defense spending experienced yearly double-digit percentage increases 19 of the 20 years between 1989 and 2009, and the 2011 budget reflected Chinese military spending equating to approximately two-thirds of the U.S. defense budget.<sup>8</sup>



(Figure 1)

The concern with this increase in defense spending is rooted in the capabilities the Chinese military is acquiring and the undefined intentions behind their acquisition. “As part of its long-term, comprehensive military modernization, China is developing and fielding large numbers of advanced medium-range ballistic and cruise missiles, new attack submarines equipped with advanced weapons, increasingly capable long-range air defense systems, electronic warfare and computer network attack capabilities, advanced fighter aircraft, and

counter-space systems.”<sup>9</sup> These investments “allow the PLA to pursue anti-access and area-denial strategies” while also developing the “ability for extended-range power projection.”<sup>10</sup> This expansion in capability and capacity is oriented upon countering U.S. power projection capabilities, and is construed as provocative to regional states and allies.

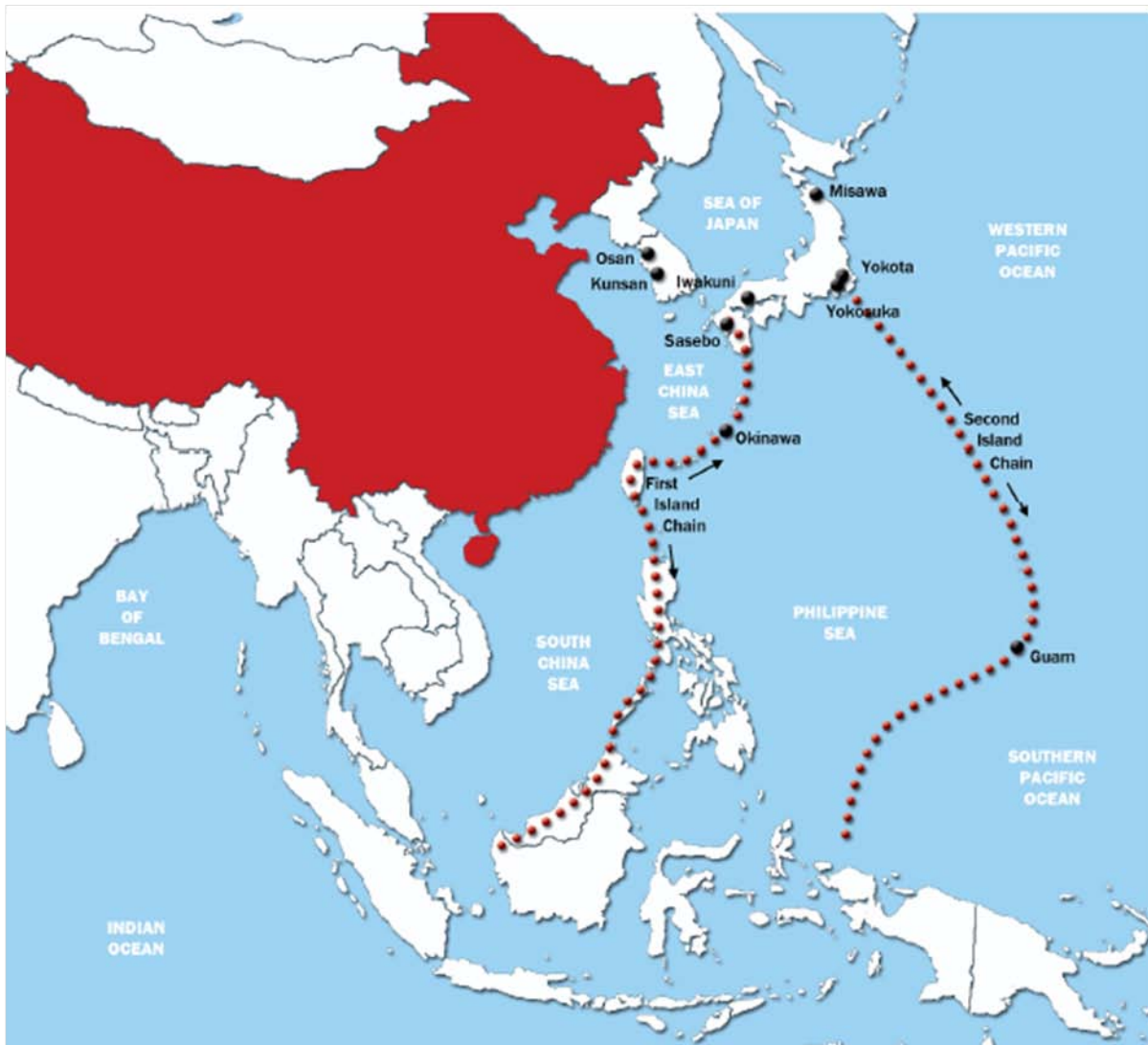
Further escalating the situation is China’s increasingly contemptuous relationship with the international community. Chinese claims to territorial waters in the South China Sea have heightened regional tensions as their diplomacy becomes increasingly aggressive and assertive. Their claims to waters considered international or within the territory of neighboring countries have been reinforced through overt action such as the multiple ship collisions between Chinese vessels and warlike rhetoric released in the Chinese press. These actions are obviously concerning to members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as well as the global community which relies upon these global commons for the transit of energy resources and commerce. Adding to these regional tensions, China’s lack of support for sanctions against the Islamic Republic of Iran has again pitted them against U.S. and western diplomatic efforts. In light of their expanding military capability and increasingly antagonistic diplomacy and actions, the United States must ensure its military remains capable of securing national interests and allies in the region.

### Air-Sea Battle Concept

The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) identified the deterrence and defeat of aggression in anti-access environments as one of six key mission areas, identified the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the People’s Republic of China as the States posing the greatest risk, and directed the development of a “joint air-sea battle

concept” between the Navy and Air Force to “defeat adversaries possessing anti-access and area-denial capabilities.”<sup>11</sup> The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment (CSBA) followed the QDR with a series of “think pieces” attempting to frame the problem of conducting operations in an anti-access, area-denial environment. In order to ensure planning addressed the most challenging scenario, the CSBA proposed the “concept first and foremost must address high-end military operations in the Western Pacific Theater of Operations (WPTO).”<sup>12</sup>

The CSBA publication, *AirSea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept*, provides a detailed breakdown of the Chinese regional sphere of influence and the capabilities either currently possessed or being acquired by the PLA. The authors conduct a comprehensive combat power analysis oriented on the opening of hostilities between China and the United States or its allies. Combatant capabilities, such as surface warfare, subsurface warfare, missile attack versus defense, and cyber- and space warfare, are compared with the intention of indentifying each side’s strengths and weaknesses. Then a notional campaign is unfolded as each side attempts to exploit a capability advantage. The scenario is based upon Chinese doctrine which is very similar to the strategy of Imperial Japan from 1941-1942.<sup>13</sup> According to CSBA, the Chinese strategy will be to inflict heavy losses on U.S. forces in theater through rapid offensive action, assume the strategic defense utilizing the geography of the first and second island chains (figure 2), and force the U.S. to fight a costly, extended-range campaign.<sup>14</sup> However, the CSBA Air-Sea Battle Concept ignores some of the most important lessons learned in the Pacific theater during World War II.



Source: CSBA, *AirSea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept*

(Figure 2)

## Western Pacific in World War II:

The operational picture in the Western Pacific changed significantly during the opening months of the war. After their surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor and other military installations on Oahu, Japanese forces moved in simultaneous operations that resulted in capturing all of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere that was the object of their prewar

planning. The Japanese offensive included the capture of the United States territories, forces, and possessions in the Philippines and continued south through British, Dutch, and Australian colonies toward mainland Australia. Meanwhile, the capital ships of the United States' Pacific Fleet, the battleships, were out of service either resting on the ocean floor or returned to San Diego for repairs.

Once the Pacific Fleet reorganized around the aircraft carriers it achieved significant battlefield success at both the Battle of Coral Sea and Midway. These battles helped attrite the Japanese Navy and reduce their naval advantage, but these air-sea battles did little to penetrate the Japanese defense or capture "maneuver space." It was the seizure of Guadalcanal and its adjacent islands that successfully stopped Japanese expansion and marked the transfer of the initiative from Japan to the United States. For this reason, it is a valuable case study for any potential battle concept focusing on the anti-access and area-denial in the Western Pacific.

The Guadalcanal Campaign was the first joint offensive action in the Pacific theater, and, from August 1942 to February 1943, the Services would learn invaluable, bloody lessons about operations in this theater. The campaign, also known as "Operation Shoestring," was conducted with minimal resources and without the complete commitment of the joint force. All the services would partake in the fighting that would cost the Navy, Marine Corps, and Army extensive blood and treasure. Despite years of development and testing, amphibious doctrine was still in its infancy; the lessons on the tactics, techniques, and procedures required to gain access and conduct sustained operations in a denied and contested environment were yet to be taught and realized. Although the Marine Corps is rightly associated with amphibious operations, the Navy learned as much, if not more, from this initial operation. The lessons learned by both services

would endure throughout the Pacific Campaign, and remain applicable to operations today within the Western Pacific Theater of Operations.

The first and most enduring lesson, and surprising the least-addressed issue by the CSBA Air-Sea Battle Concept, was the complete interdependence of the operational domains – all the domains. The analogy of the three-legged stool is applicable here, because, as the combatants would soon learn, the failure of any domain could collapse the entire organization or have drastic impacts upon the other elements. In essence, the fighting proved to be a truly joint fight where the commander must be able to dominate all the domains: air, land, and sea. In reality, naval assets depended upon aerial platforms to conduct “the scouting battle.”<sup>15</sup> Land based air platforms provided greater persistence, faster response, and provided greater flexibility compared to the carrier fleet. Air forces depended upon a secure location from which to conduct and control air operations, and relied upon naval assets for sustainment. In order to secure these locations, land forces required air and naval forces to isolate the objective during the offense. This concept is simple, but the execution proved to be a learning process. It would take months for the services to achieve the isolation of Guadalcanal, but subsequent operations, like the amphibious assault on Tarawa, were accomplished within days or weeks.

The second night of the Guadalcanal Campaign, 8-9 August, demonstrated where the campaign was to be lost or won, and the results of this battle of Savo Island did not foretell of American victory. The nighttime surface battle cost four U.S. Navy cruisers and more than a thousand sailors, and was so decisive that the Japanese Navy would command the waters off Guadalcanal during periods of darkness for months to come. The failure of the U.S. Navy surface fleet to isolate the island or dependably interdict the nightly Japanese surface fleet providing resupply and conducting bombardment, known as the “Tokyo Express”, allowed the



Japanese to continue to reinforce and provide significant resistance to the land forces efforts. This would change three months later with the combined fleet action begun on November 13th, where, at a cost of over 1,500 United States sailors, a major Japanese counter attack force was decimated prior to landing.

The difference between these two surface engagements was air support. The first battle was an ambush fought without air support, because the carriers had left the area and Henderson Field was not yet secure. The Navy was better prepared for the second battle. Land based aircraft identified the Japanese fleet approximately 300 miles from Guadalcanal the prior day to the battle which eliminated surprise.<sup>16</sup> The ensuing night engagement was a draw, but “on 14 and 15 November the Cactus Air Force of Army, Navy, and Marine Corps planes defeated and destroyed the largest reinforcing operation launched against Guadalcanal comprised of 11 cruisers and 11 transports.”<sup>17</sup> Carrier-based aircraft also participated, but due to the distance of the carrier from the objective, the aircraft landed at Henderson Field.<sup>18</sup>

The November naval battle was a turning point in the campaign, because the growing U.S. Navy dominance of the surrounding sea-space, facilitated by land-based aircraft, allowed the land forces to transition from the defense of Henderson Field to the clearing of remaining Japanese resistance on the island. The persistent presence of land-based reconnaissance and strike aircraft enabled the Navy to control space and establish domain supremacy. Maritime supremacy effectively isolated the objective which enabled land forces to seize territory which provided a secure location from which air forces operated. Until all the domains were coordinated and synchronized, none were capable of achieving dominance independently.

Another key lesson of the Guadalcanal Campaign originates from the first battle of Savo Island and the catastrophic effects that resulted from a lack of air support. While there were

several failures within the surface fleet that contributed to the loss, the lack of air support was the critical factor that enabled the Japanese to achieve such a one-sided victory. So where was the air support? This questions that must be addressed by the Air-Sea Battle Concept, and, because the CSBA assumes the Chinese will likely target space assets, the conventional nature of this fight remains applicable.

The requirement for air support during the initial landing and off load at Guadalcanal was a contentious issue identified, but not adequately addressed during planning. Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, was the commander responsible for accomplishing the “seizure and occupation of Santa Cruz Islands, Tulagi, and adjacent positions.”<sup>19</sup> He was not present during the only joint planning session which yielded an “obvious command problem” to a subordinate, and supporting, unit.<sup>20</sup> “Admiral (Frank J.) Fletcher, the commander of the whole expeditionary force, was also the commander of the *Saratoga* carrier task force, one of three such groups in the larger force. He was, in effect, conducting a symphony from the second violin section...What risks deserved his highest concern: the risk to the expeditionary force (and by extension the landing force, which was the whole outfits reason for being), or the risks to his carriers, the ships that the Navy valued most?”<sup>21</sup> The problem would manifest itself before the end of the second day when Admiral Fletcher withdrew the Carrier Task Force from the objective before offloading was complete. With the amphibious forces’ limited float planes on anti-submarine patrol to the south, the enemy fleet was able to maneuver undetected and uncontested.

Admiral Fletcher’s concern for his carriers was not unfounded. The U.S. Navy entered World War II with six fast carriers, but the *Lexington* and *Yorktown* were sunk and the *Saratoga* damaged by a torpedo in the short time that elapsed before the Guadalcanal Campaign.<sup>22</sup> The campaign further consumed the Navy carriers *Wasp* and *Hornet*, and of the initial six, only the

*Saratoga* and *Enterprise* would survive despite both receiving significant battle damages. The arrival of Essex-class carriers and the full mobilization of the U.S. shipbuilding industry backfilled these losses, but these future capabilities did not, and could not, enter into the commander's tactical calculus at the time.

Any future Air-Sea Battle Concept must address the same concerns Admiral Fletcher faced, and that is the commitment of the aircraft carriers in contested waters. In Fletcher's case, with the threat of an enemy surface fleet, aircraft, and reported submarine presence, the carrier was "deemed too precious to risk."<sup>23</sup> The Chinese threat today is equally capable and the carrier fleet remains the Navy's premiere capital ship. The power projection capability afforded by today's super-carriers is undoubtedly a formidable one, but it is not without risk. The ability to utilize this capability to achieve operational objectives will depend upon the risk equation commander's implement. Whether the mission is sea (and undersea) control or sea (and undersea) denial, the concept of the "unsinkable carrier" must be leveraged.<sup>24</sup> Domain supremacy in the Western Pacific will be localized as opposed to recent conflicts where it was regionalized, if not ubiquitous; local domain supremacy will not be achieved until all the domains are integrated and mutually supporting.

#### Air-Sea: What's Missing?

The problem with the CSBA Air-Sea Battle Concept is rooted in the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The QDR tasked the Air Force and Navy to develop an air-sea battle concept that "will address how air and naval forces will integrate capabilities across all operational domains - air, sea, land, space, and cyberspace - to counter growing challenges to U.S. freedom of action."<sup>25</sup> Although the QDR references the domain, it does not include land

forces as an integral part of the problem or potential solution. Any concept meant to “address high-end military operations in the Western Pacific Theater of Operations (WPTO)” must include all the services, because supremacy in one domain depends upon coordinating actions across all of the domains. In other words, success in the WPTO depends upon a joint “single battle concept” that embraces the idea that “operations or events in one part of the battlespace often have profound and consequent effects on other areas and events.”<sup>26</sup>

Although the concept is not intended to be an operational plan, by limiting discussion within the Navy and Air Force the QDR is leading planning efforts toward the creation of a service-oriented plan similar to that of War Plan Orange prior to World War II. The Orange Plan identified the risk Imperial Japan presented to U.S. interest in the region, but Army commanders considered this Navy-centric plan an “act of madness.”<sup>27</sup> The plan remained a Navy plan, and as General Henry “Hap” Arnold stated prior to the Guadalcanal campaign, the Navy “did not understand the technique of ground operations nor the technique of air operations” but “it was their war against the Japanese.”<sup>28</sup> The lack of joint planning during the war was merely a continuation of the disjointed pre-war planning that did not adequately synchronize Army and Navy efforts in support of American forces in the Philippines. This environment for planning and execution detracts from the inherently synergistic effects of today’s military and should be the antithesis of any operational concept.

Complete integration of land forces into the existing air-sea concept will also prevent planners from focusing entirely upon the technological challenges identified in the CSBA’s proposal. Planners and industry must continue to seek the technological advantage over potential adversaries, but the fiscally constrained environment of today demands consideration of non-material, as well as material, solutions. As an operational concept, CSBA’s Air-Sea Battle

Concept provides an input into the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS), and much of the document focuses on identifying capability gaps and risks for future defense acquisitions to address. Traces of non-material solutions are evident within the concept, but these focus primarily upon the integration of Air Force and Navy maritime strike capabilities with few references to land force integration. According to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3170.01H, dated January, 10, 2012, “Any capability requirements which have significant capability gaps typically drive development of capability solutions which are materiel, non-materiel, or a combination of both.”<sup>29</sup> Before perceived capability gaps are translated into documentation that commences the acquisition cycle in pursuit of a material solution, a joint analysis including the Army and Marine Corps should be conducted utilizing the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities, and Policy (DOTMLPF-P) format to determine if non-material solutions can fulfill identified capability gaps. By excluding land forces, the Air-Sea Battle Concept sacrifices the synergy of the joint force by limiting service input into the planning process and discounts the strength inherent to the joint force.

Another shortfall of the concept is that it minimizes the impact land forces can have in support of naval and air operations. Land forces, both the Army and Marine Corps, can facilitate the air-sea concept by securing forward bases and bringing unique service capabilities to augment the Navy and Air Force. Army missile defense and construction units provide greater survivability to existing bases within the Chinese cruise missile threat. Marine Corps forces provide the ability to secure and establish expeditionary airfields from which tactical aircraft and Unmanned Aerial Systems can operate in support of the scouting battle. These additional

airfields would disperse U.S. forces thereby mitigating the Chinese ability to mass fires and compounding their challenge of a diminishing supply of cruise missiles.

This does not mean inclusion of land forces only provides a forcible entry capability and expeditionary support to the maritime fight. The integration of the Army and Marine Corps will provide greater perspective to the situation, and may challenge unstated assumptions such as the restriction of air assets to existing airfields on Guam, Diego Garcia, Japan, and aircraft carriers. The reinforcement of regional allies with defensive and command and control capabilities will increase coalition combat power and presence, and should be leveraged early to ensure access and mitigate Chinese denial strategies. Land forces provide this scalable, expeditionary capability, and, as in cases such as Joint Special Operations Task Force – Philippines, may already have a presence and established relationships to facilitate rapid integration of allies.

In a space contested environment, the ability to conduct or defeat an anti-access area-denial campaign will depend upon the ability to find and engage the enemy. Local, land based aircraft will provide the most persistent presence to the scouting battle, and ground forces will be key to providing a secure environment from which to operate. Additional airfields increase the sea-space that is controlled or denied while reducing the threat to navy ships. Incorporation of regional airfields, existing and expeditionary, complicates the enemy's dilemma by dispersing assets, and this dispersion also complements current U.S. air platforms. For example, forward airfields can mitigate the limited range of the Navy's new P8 Poseidon Multi-Mission Maritime Aircraft by providing resupply positions that increasing on-station time. Other assets, such as the MQ-4C Broad Area Maritime Surveillance (BAMS) Unmanned Aerial System and tactical aircraft such as the Joint Strike Fighter, could also be forward positioned or logistically supported at these sites in order to best support maritime scouting and strike operations.

Additionally, by including land forces into a concept for operations within the WPTO, planners can better mitigate known weaknesses faced by U.S. forces operating within the Western Pacific Theater. Consider the CSBA statement regarding the vulnerability of forward bases: “There is no ‘silver bullet’ solution to protecting forward bases and restoring them to ‘sanctuary’ status. The best that can be hoped for is that some combination of the standard active and passive defensive measures, coupled with repair and remediation capabilities and capacities, can enable their periodic use.”<sup>30</sup> While these bases are vulnerable to attack and degradation of capability, planners must seek a solution based upon harnessing the complete potential of America’s joint force, not just hope. Incorporation of land forces into planning ensures service unique capabilities, such as expeditionary runways and runway repair, F-35B Vertical Short-Takeoff and Landing, and expeditionary command and control capabilities, are fully exploited and leveraged in support of the joint force. Assuming the enemy will attack established forward airfields is prudent, but shackling the joint force to these sites alone is negligent. Today’s military retains forcible entry options capable of airfield seizure and less intrusive options to augment allied capabilities; planning to counter and defeat a Chinese’ anti-access and area denial strategy is not limited to major U.S. airbases and aircraft carriers.

## Conclusion

As the United States reorients itself toward the Asia-Pacific region, the military is returning to the role of preparing for conventional warfare with a nation state. Secretary Clinton described the strategic importance of this region by stating, “The stretch of sea from the Indian Ocean through the Strait of Malacca to the Pacific contains the world's most vibrant trade and energy routes.”<sup>31</sup> These global commons are crucial to international and regional stability, and,

therefore, are vital to U.S. national interests. China dominates the predominantly maritime environment, and the multiple U.S. allied nations and states that exist within China's sphere of influence are experiencing increasing pressure from this growing regional and international power. The continued modernization and expansion of the Chinese People's Liberation Army poses a potential threat to U.S. and allied interests within the region. The U.S. military must prepare to meet and defeat the challenges of the anti-access, area-denial capabilities inherent to a Chinese regional strategy.

The Air-Sea Battle Concept directed by the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Report and proposed by the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment identifies the threat posed by Chinese military, but lacks the joint focus required to be successful in the Western Pacific Theater of Operations. By excluding or ignoring the role of land forces, the CSBA concept fails to recognize the key lesson learned during the Pacific Campaign of World War II: the interdependence of the domains – air, sea, land, and now space and cyberspace - is an operational imperative. Conflicts within this region will be fought across the seams of traditional domains, and operational objectives can only be obtained through the effective coordination and synchronization of the entire joint force toward a common objective. The future for warfare, particularly in the WPTO, should be a Single Battle Concept that harnesses the synergy and interoperability of the entire joint force and should not be limited, even if only in name, to an air-sea concept.



## Endnotes

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<sup>16</sup> Samuel B. Griffith II, *The Battle for Guadalcanal* (The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1963), 194

<sup>17</sup> Merrill B. Twining, *No Bended Knee: The Battle For Guadalcanal*. (Novato, Ca: Presidio Press, 1996), 162

<sup>18</sup> Samuel B. Griffith II, *The Battle for Guadalcanal* (The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1963), 201

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